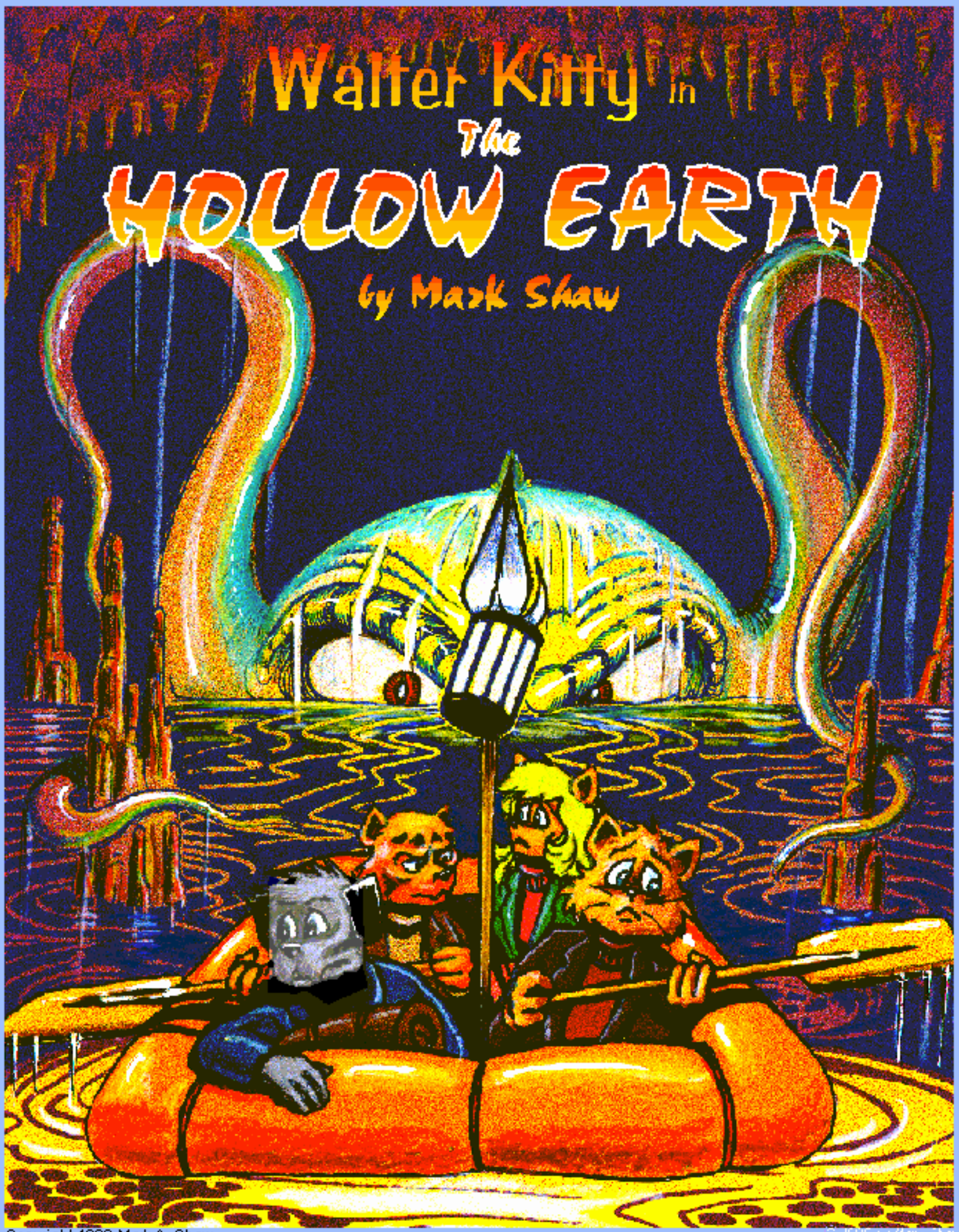
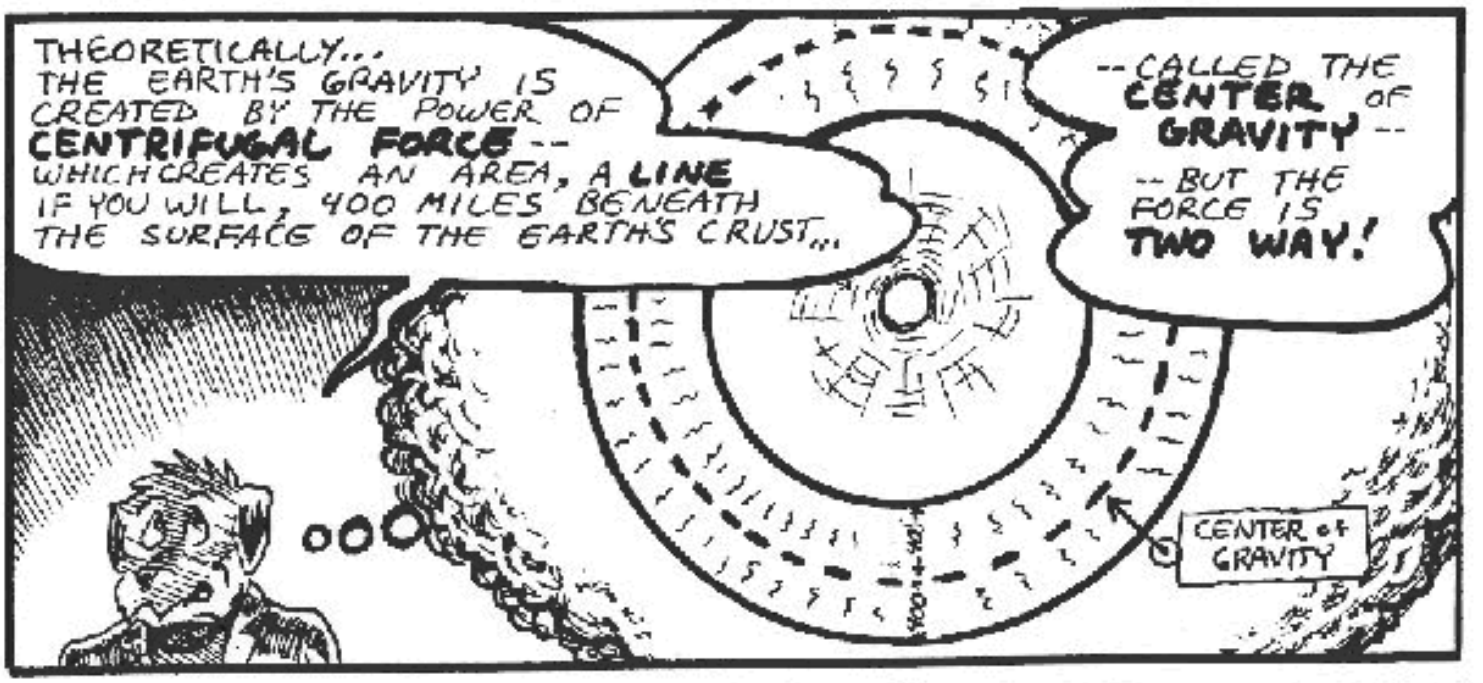
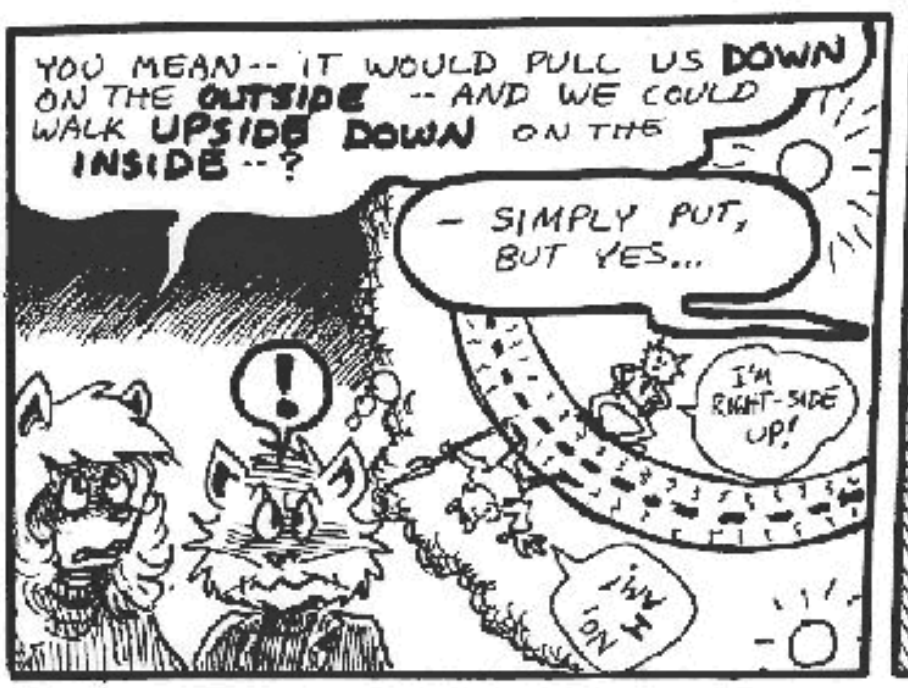


Copyright 1998 Mark A. Shaw

Chapter 4: "Chutes and Ladders"





Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

HOURS LATER... THE LITTLE PARTY FOLLOWS THE DRY RIVER BED THAT SLOWLY LEADS THEM IN A GRADUAL DESCENT INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE EARTH...

EOWCH!

YEOWCH!

OW! OWOO!

OWOOCH!

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

A VAST LAKE... BLACK AS PITCH!

...AN ANCIENT RESERVIOR... BUILT BY THE SUBTERRANEANS.. NOW DEAD AND ABANDONED...

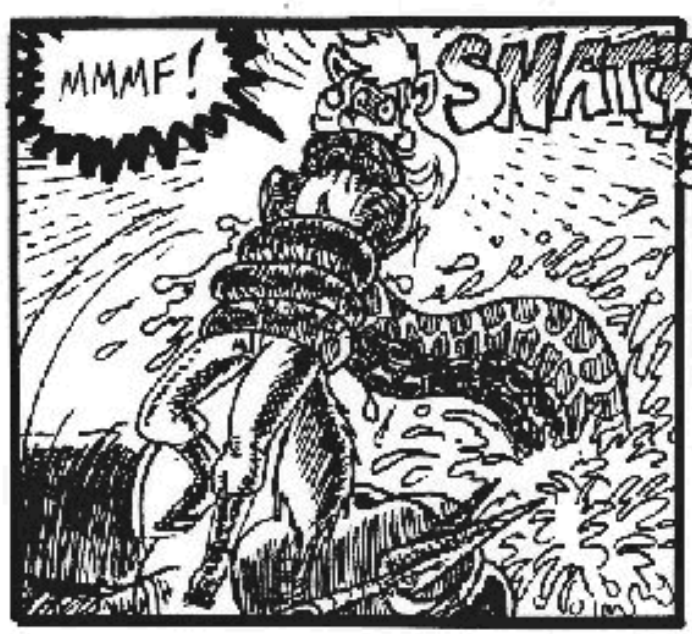
WELL, WHAT **NOW**? SHOULD WE SCALE THE CLIFFS AND GO AROUND?

OH, LORD, NO!

HONESTLY, GUYS--I DON'T THINK I CAN GO ANOTHER STEP!

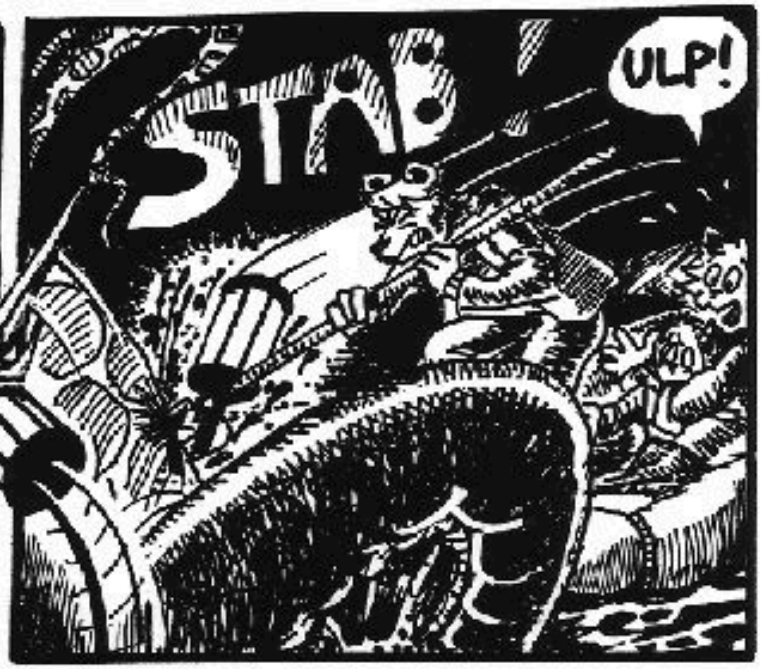
Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw



Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw



Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

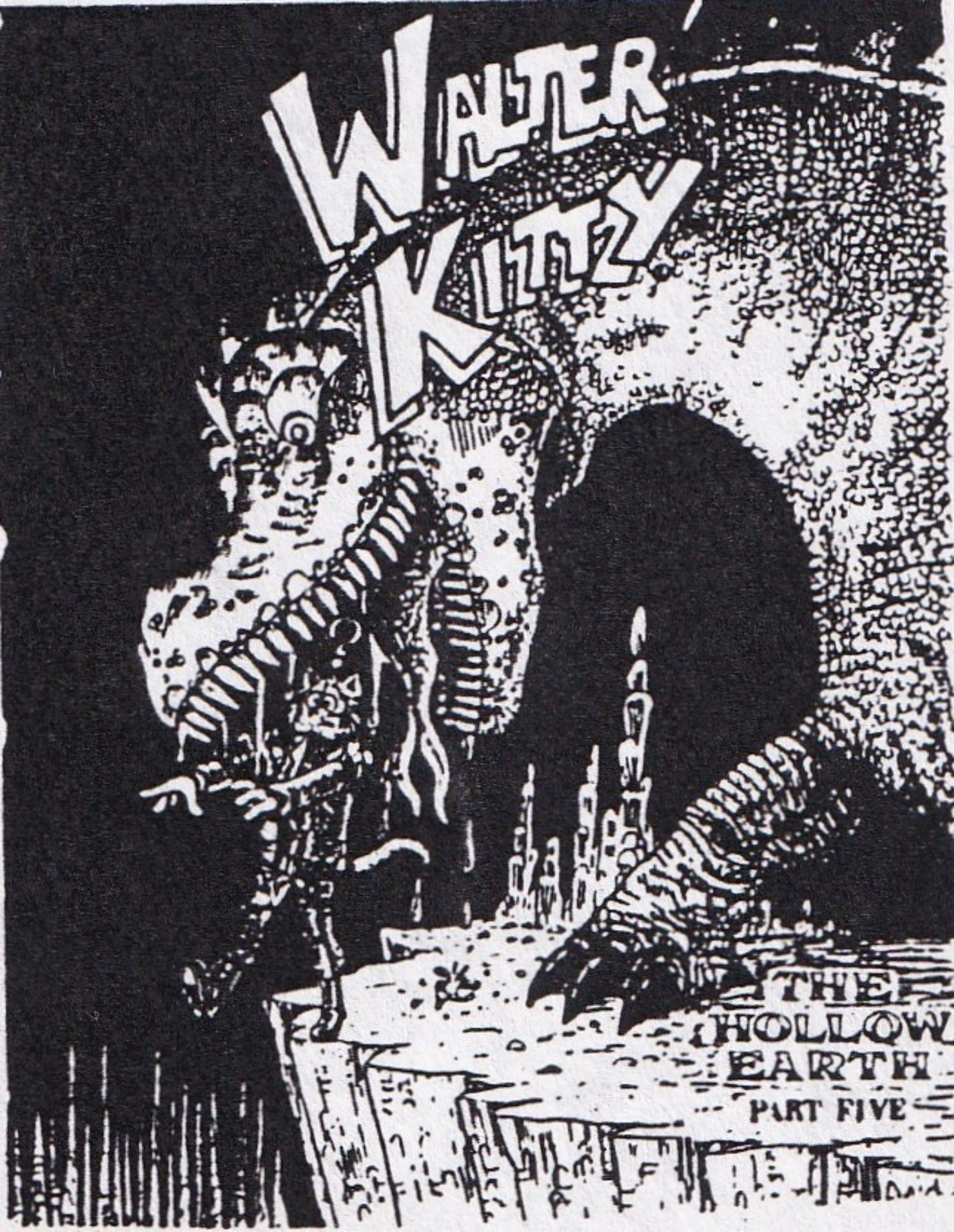
Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw

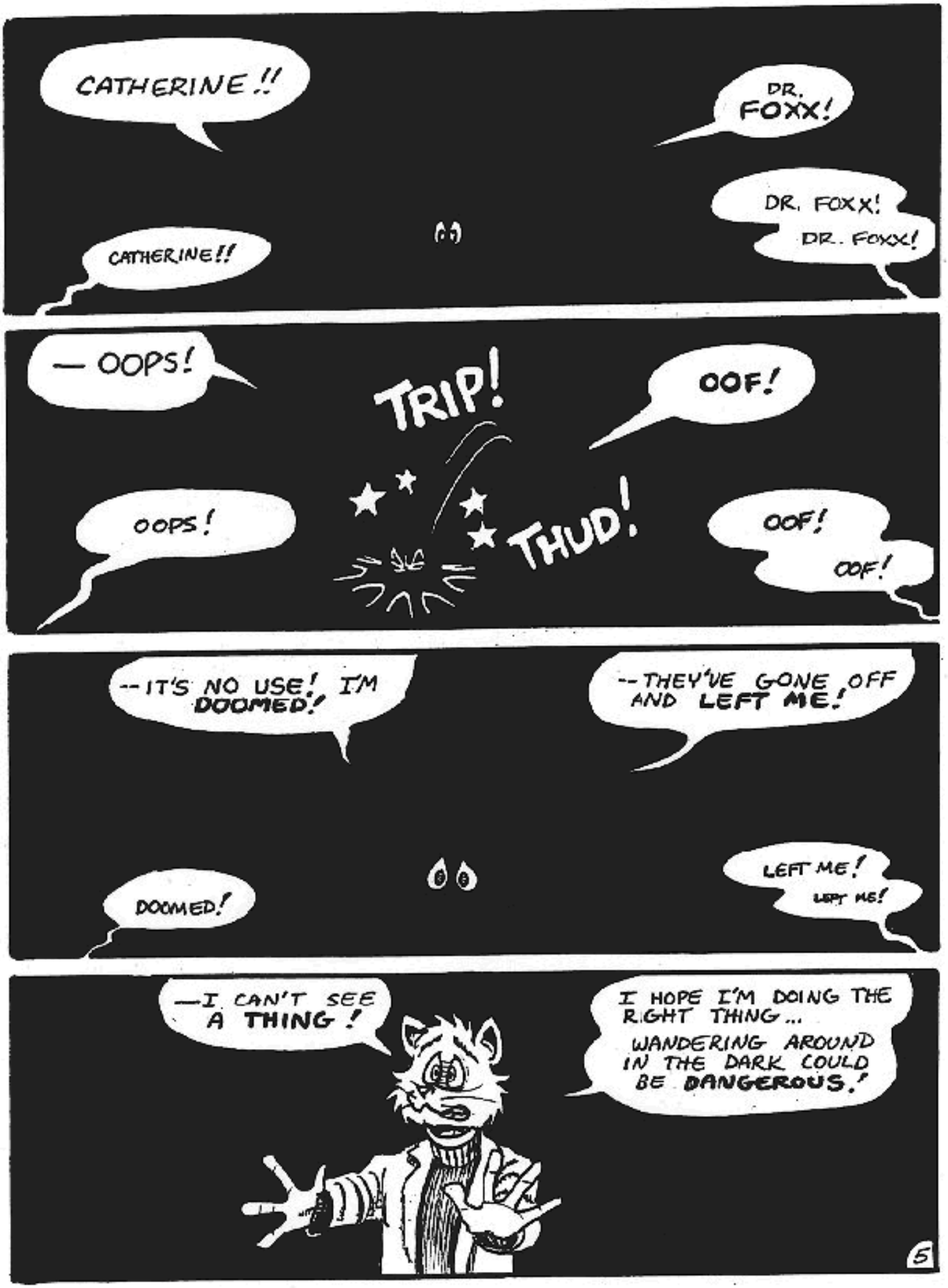
Copyright 1996 Mark A. Shaw


WALTER KITTY
THE HOLLOW EARTH
PART FIVE

OH, DEAR DOG!

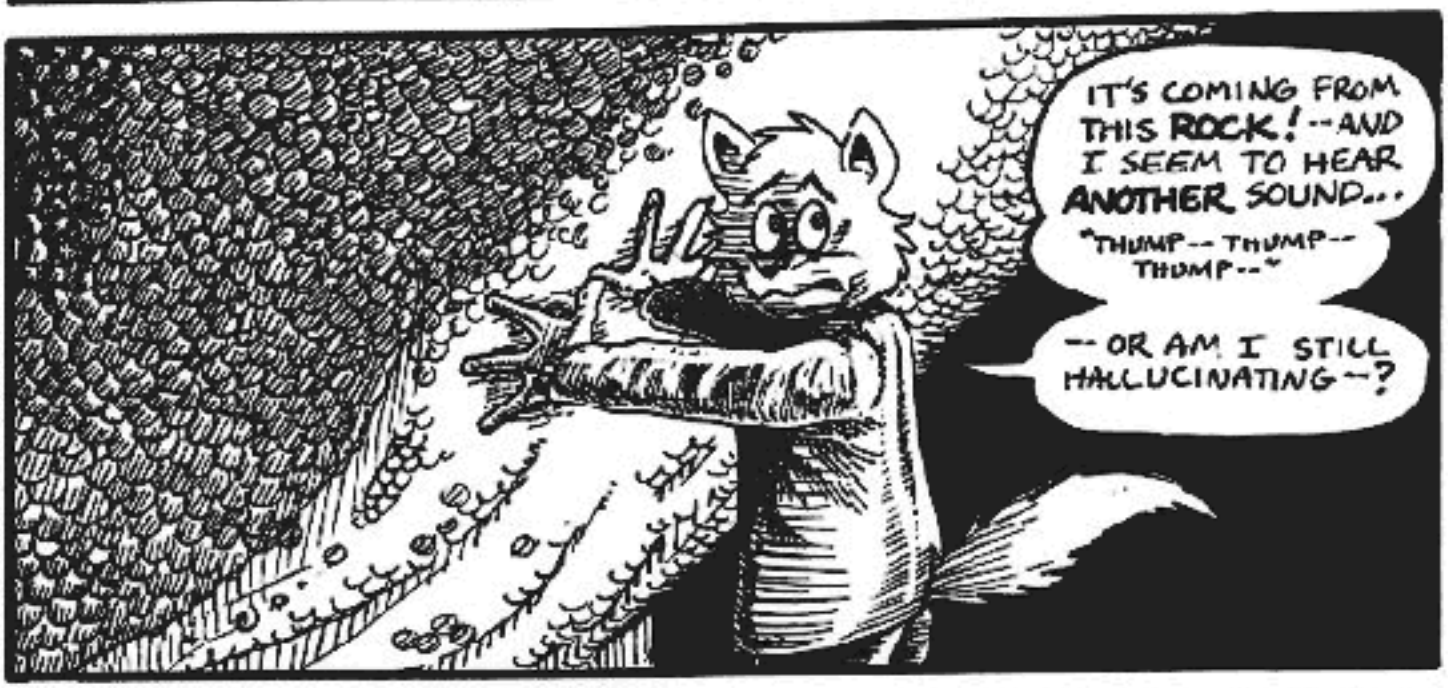
Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

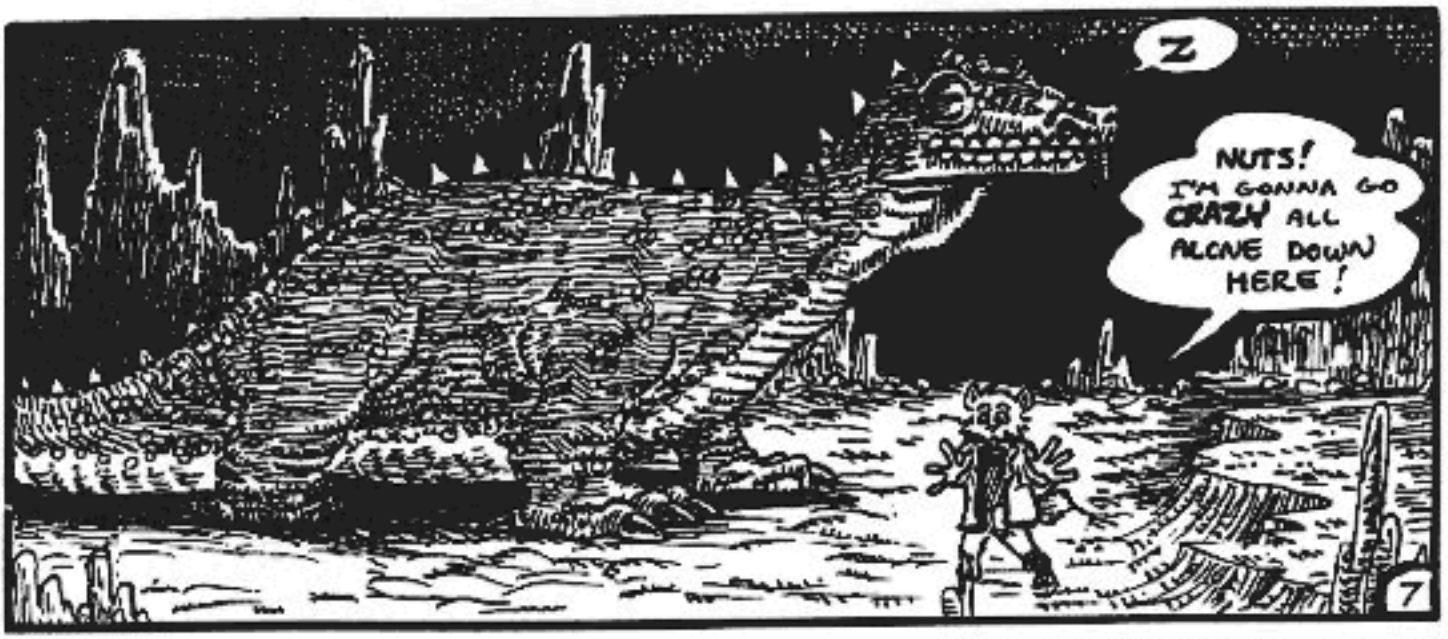
Copyright Mark Shaw 1989



Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

Copyright Mark Shaw 1989



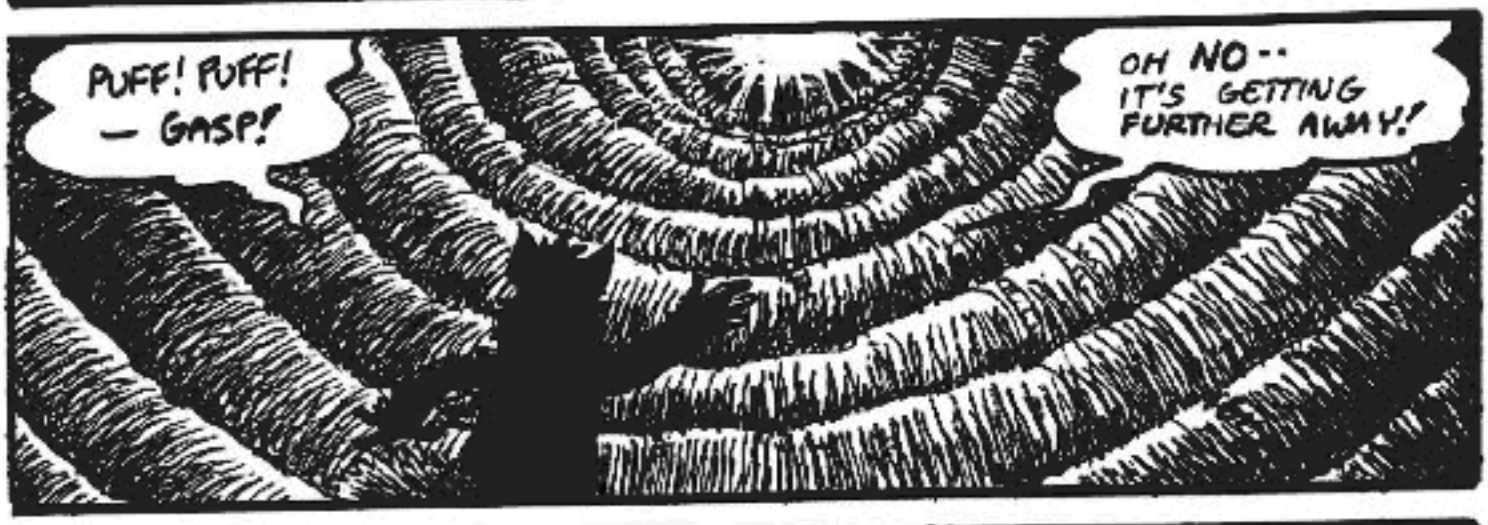


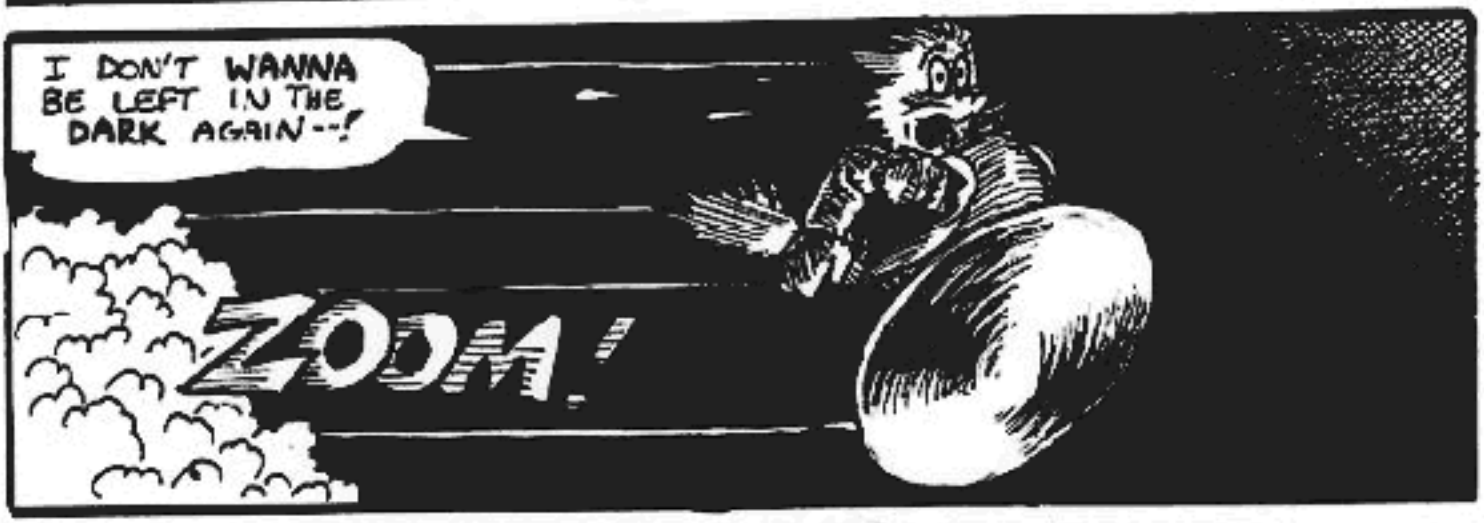
Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

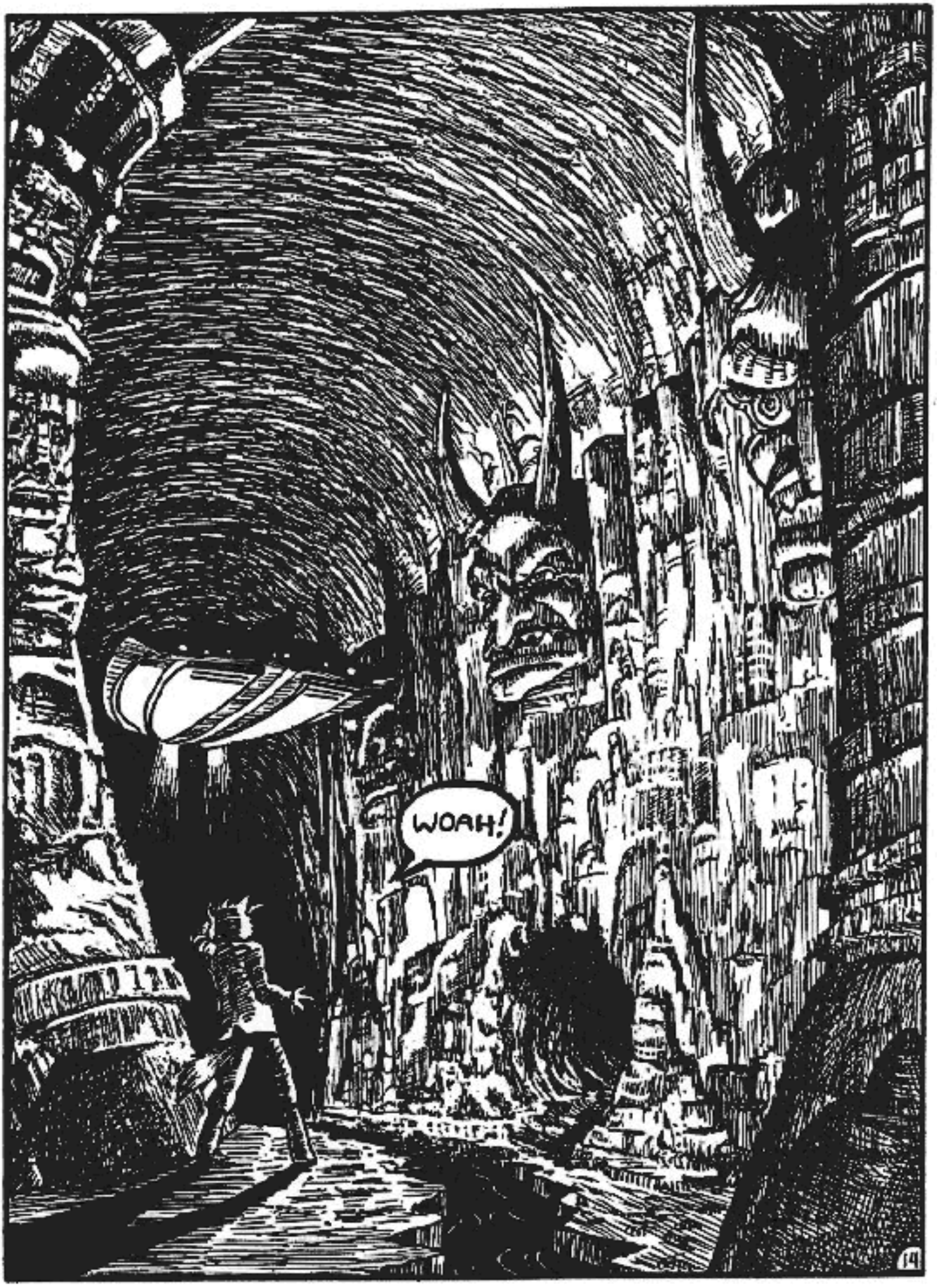
Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

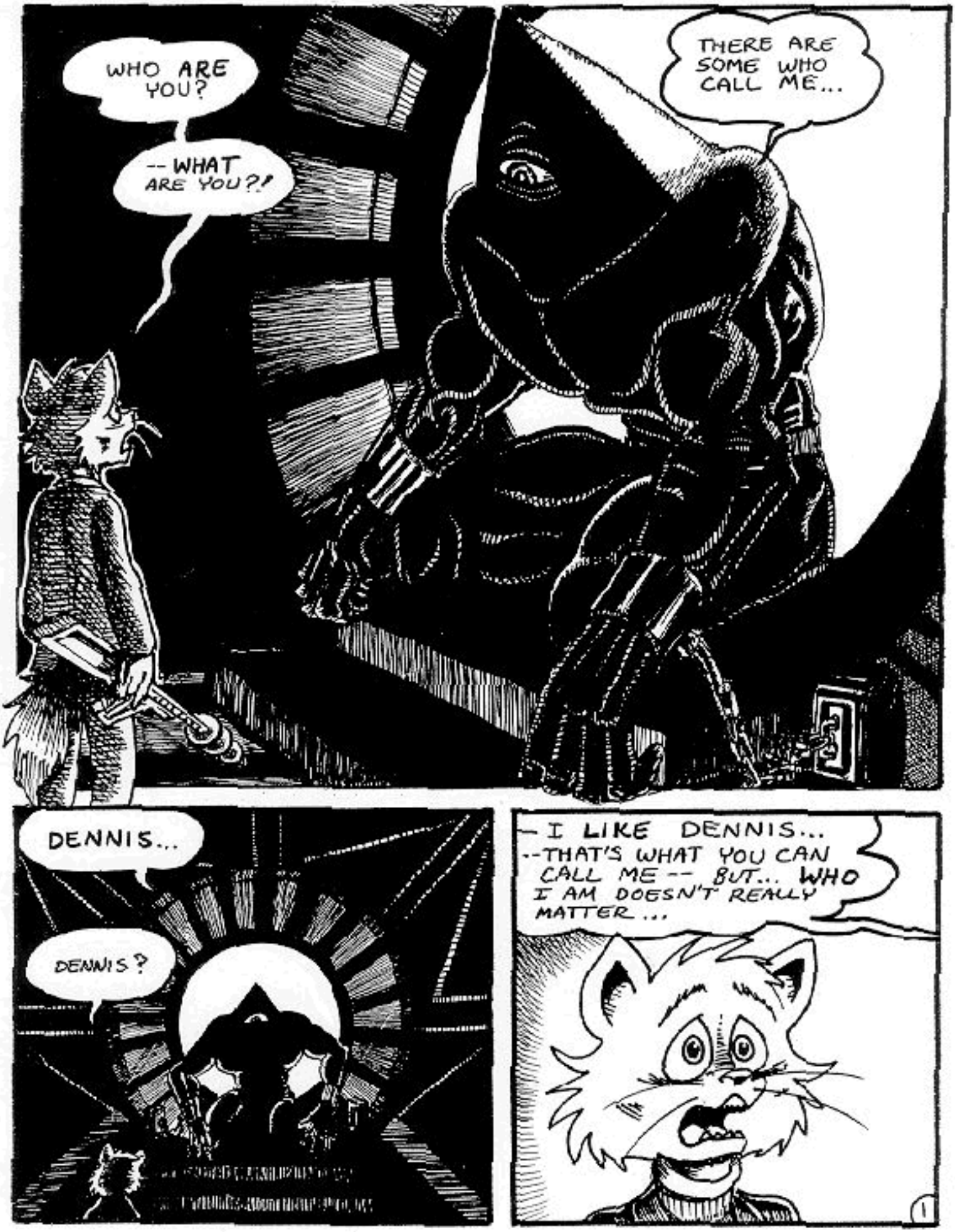




Copyright Mark Shaw 1989



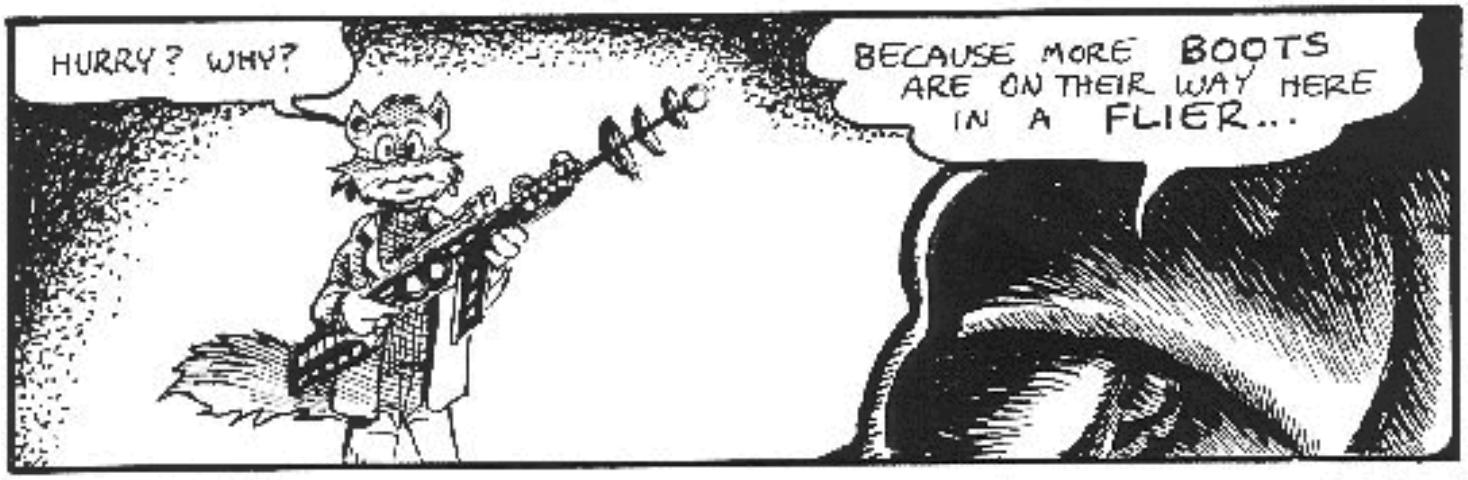
Copyright Mark Shaw 1989

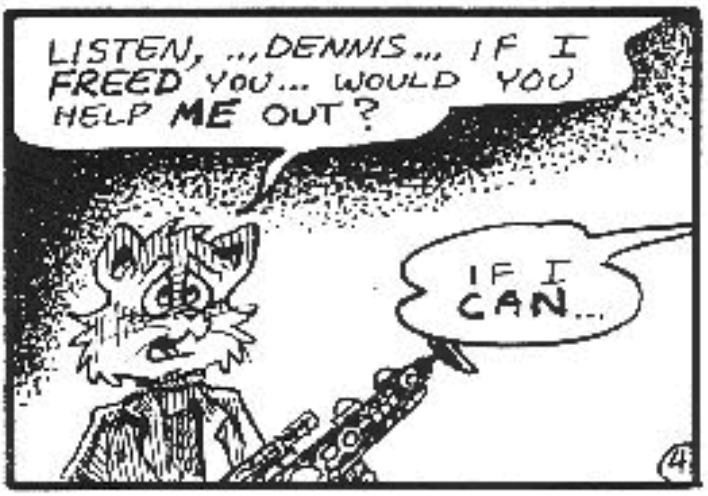


Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

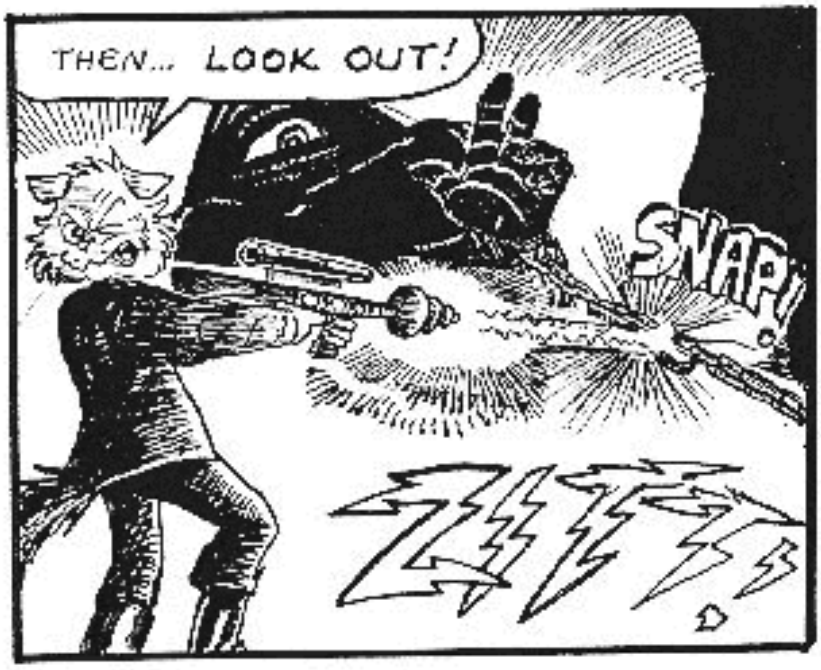
Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

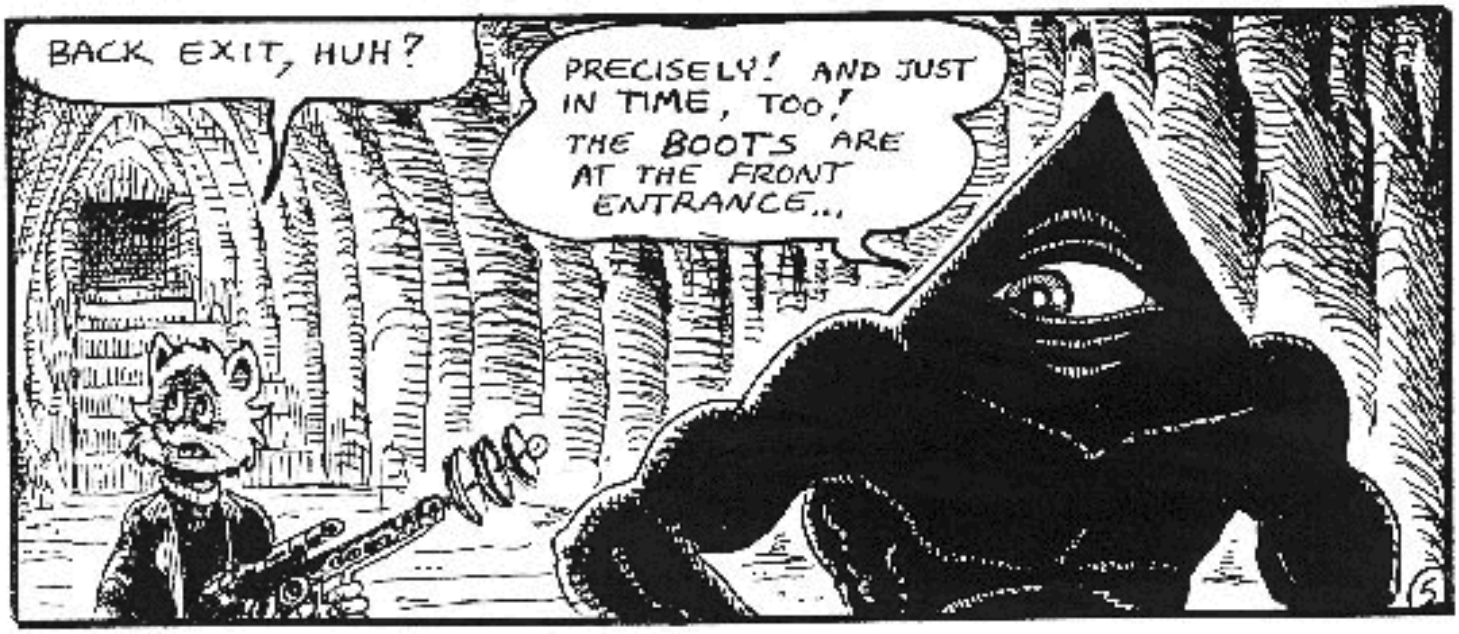
Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw





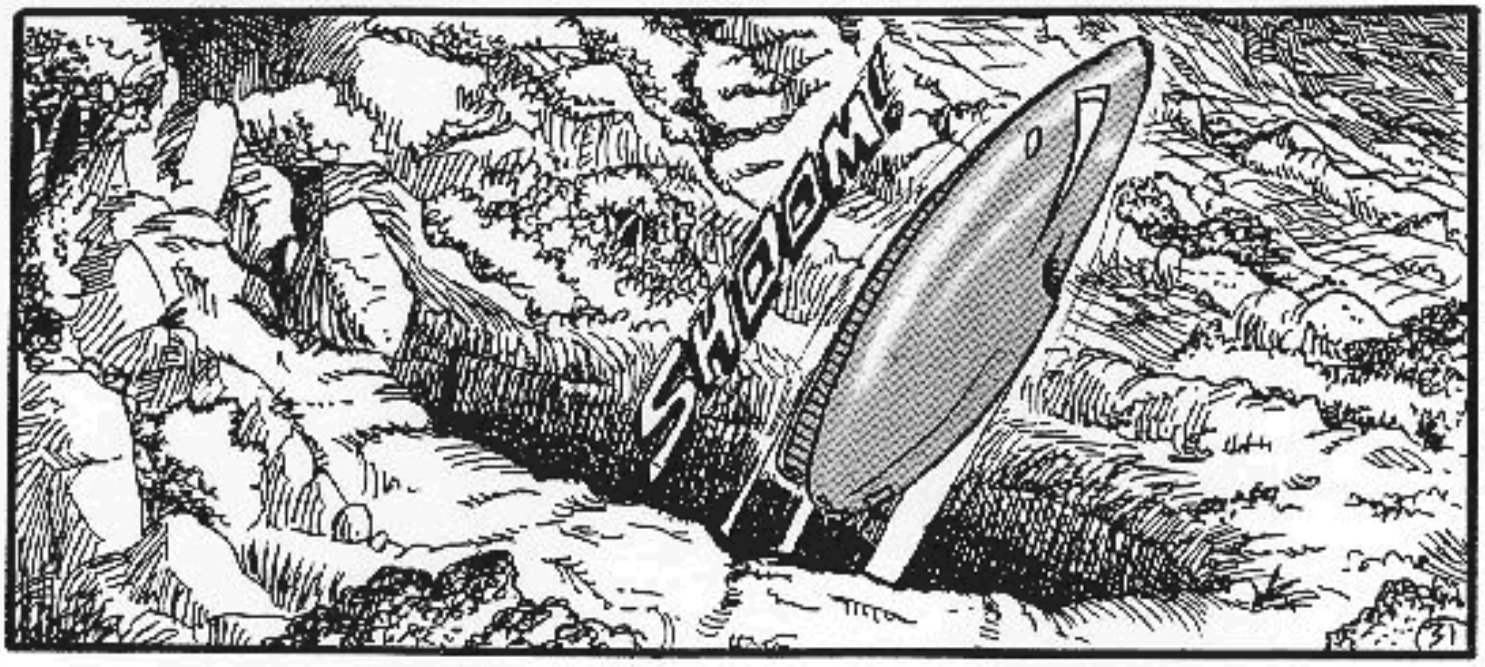
Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw





Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw



Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

Copyright 1988 Mark Shaw

AWK!
COMICS
presents
WALTER KITTY
GIANT
DOUBLE SIZED
ISSUE!!
No. 10
$1.95
THE
HOLLOW
EARTH
PART SIX
And Seven

ALL ACROSS THE PLANET, THOSE ASLEEP DREAM TROUBLED DREAMS...
THOSE AWAKE FEEL A SUDDEN, UNEXPLAINED APPREHENSION--
?!
A STRANGE VIBRATION FILLS THE VERY AIR...
-THEN, SUDDENLY--
2

--NEVER IN RECORDED HISTORY HAS OUR PLANET SUFFERED SUCH WORLDWIDE DEVISTATION IN SO SHORT A PERIOD OF TIME--!

FIRE -- FLOOD -- VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS -- EARTHQUAKES -- STORMS --

AS IF NATURE ITSELF HAD COME TO VIOLENT, ANGRY LIFE -- DECIDING TO RID ITSELF OF ITS FRAGILE INHABITANTS--!

--REPORTS OF INCREDIBLE UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA HAVE FLOODED ALL STATIONS--

-- LIGHTS IN THE SKY --

-- HORRENDOUS NOISES --

--AND EVEN WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A TERRIBLE SHARED EXPERIENCE --

-- A PSYCHIC FEAR THAT AFFECTS HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE AT ONCE--!

ARE YOU PREPARED?

IT'S THE END!

--AND THERE SEEM TO BE NO ANSWERS FORTHCOMING FROM OUR LEADERS IN SCIENCE AND GOVERNMENT -- NO ONE CAN SAY WHY THESE THINGS ARE HAPPENING--

...AND BESIDES THE DISASTERS, DR. STRANGEFROOT, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE REPORTS OF PSYCHIC TURMOIL SO MANY PEOPLE SEEM TO BE EXPERIENCING? --(GULP--) MYSELF INCLUDED!!

I CAN'T! NOBODY CAN! WE'RE DOOMED! -- DOOMED, DO YOU HEAR?! I -- I JUST FEEL IT!!

OH, BOY!! JUST LIKE IN "WHEN WORLDS KER-SPLAT!"!

INCREDIBLE!! I HAVE SUCCEEDED!!
THE POWER OF THE SOURCE EXCEEDS MY WILDEST EXPECTATIONS--!

THE DEVASTATION IS... INTOXICATING!
AND FURTHERMORE-- BLAH BLAH BLAH
THE NEGATIVE ENERGY THAT COMPOSES THE EVIL SIDE OF THE SOURCE IS EVEN MORE POWERFUL AND DESTRUCTIVE THAN I DARED HOPE!

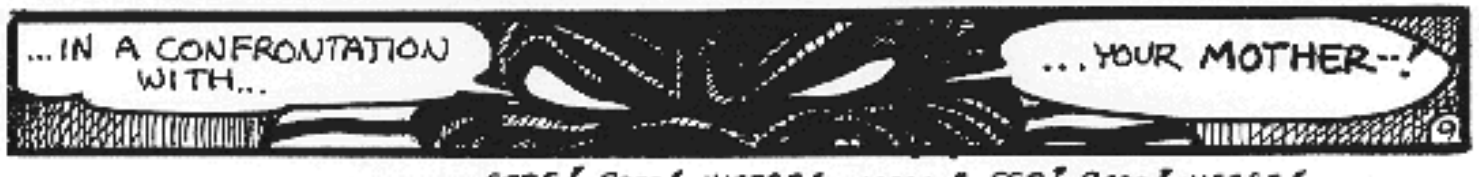
--I'LL WITHDRAW IT FOR A WHILE FOR NOW-- LET THE POOR SURFACE DWELLERS CATCH THEIR BREATH--
--THEN HIT THEM AGAIN WHEN THEY LEAST EXPECT IT!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! I HAVEN'T HAD THIS MUCH PLEASURE IN AGES!!

IF ONLY MY ABSORPTION CRYSTAL WERE FINISHED -- THEN, MY TRIUMPH WOULD BE EVEN SWEETER...
TIPPY-TIP! TAP!
TAP! TAP!
BUT ALAS, I SHALL HAVE TO WAIT --
THIS BEING DELICATE WORK... MY THICK-FINGERED UNDERLINGS MUST NEEDS TAKE SPECIAL CARE NOT TO MAKE... MISTAKES --!
BUT IT WILL BE WORTH THE WAIT... FOR WHEN THE CRYSTAL IS FINISHED...

THEN -- THEN I SHALL HAVE THE ULTIMATE WEAPON INDEED --!
HHMMM
-- WITHOUT HAVING TO USE THIS MORTAL VESSEL --!
-- THE ONLY OTHER SOUR NOTE IS THE LOSS OF MENDEL IN THAT CAVE-IN ---

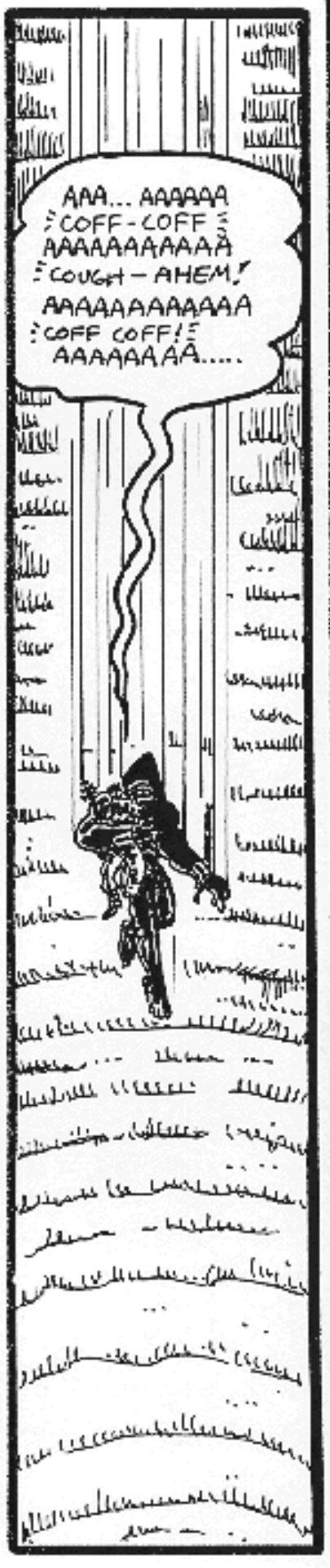
I... SHALL MISS HIM...

SIRE! THE SOURCE RETURNS!!
-- SO! IT RETURNS TO ITS MISTRESS AT LAST --
-- I'LL HANDLE IT!
SNATCH



SSSS! BOOO! HISSSS! SSSSS! SSS! BOOO! HISSSS!

MEANWHILE...



AREN'T YOU TIRED OF THAT YET, WALTER?

AAAAAA...

-YOU'VE BEEN DOING THAT NON-STOP FOR TWO HOURS!

IS THAT HOW LONG WE'VE BEEN FALLING?

YES. -WELL... TWO HOURS, FOUR MINUTES AND FIFTY-ONE SECONDS, ACTUALLY...

...BUT, WE'RE ABOUT TO HIT THE CENTER OF GRAVITY...

COFF COFF... WHAT'S THAT?

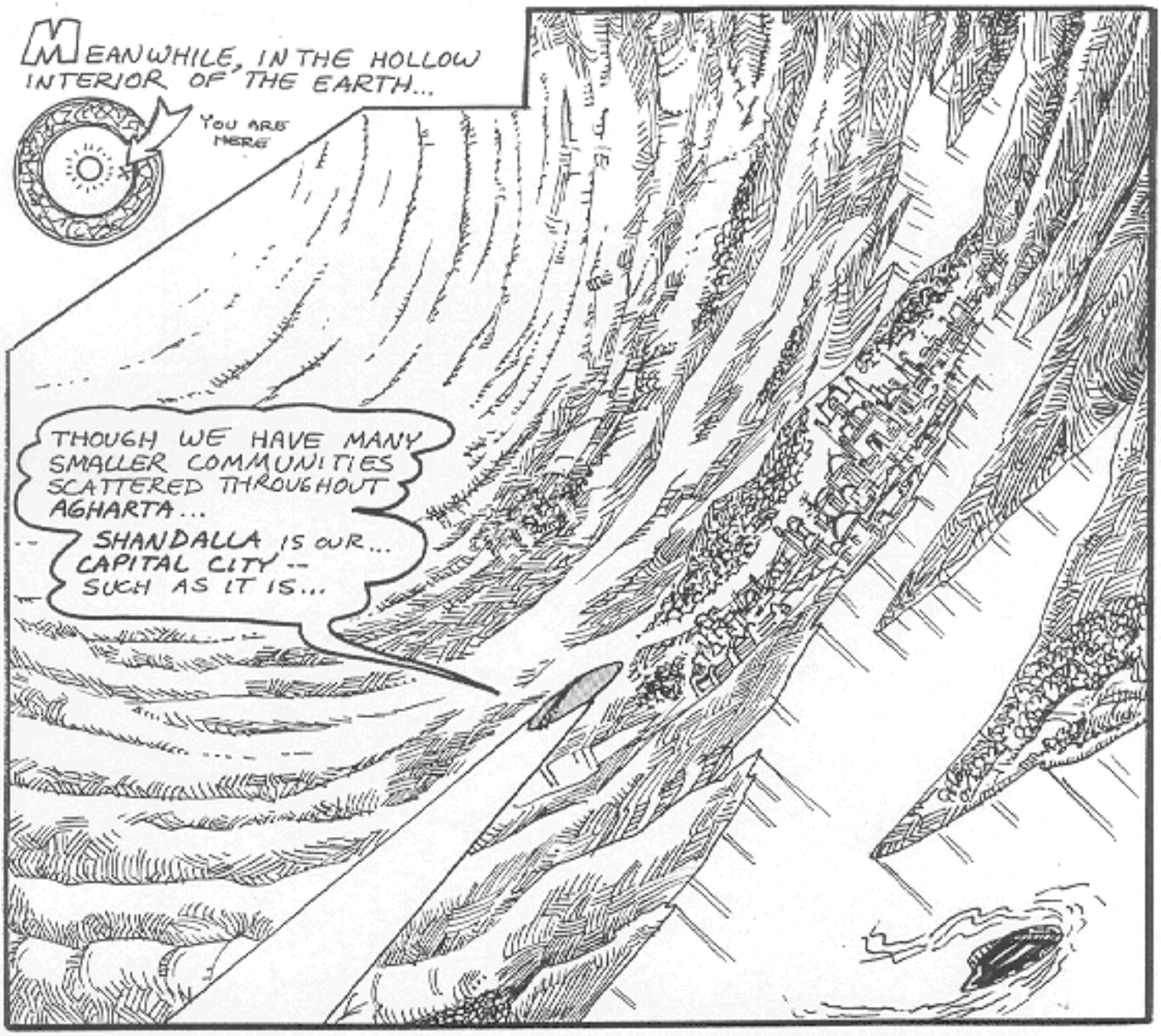
THIS IS IT!

UNK!

WE-WE'RE WEIGHTLESS!

YES! THIS IS THE EXACT CENTER OF THE LINE OF GRAVITY THAT EXTENDS AROUND THE WORLD -- 400 MILES BENEATH THE SURFACE...

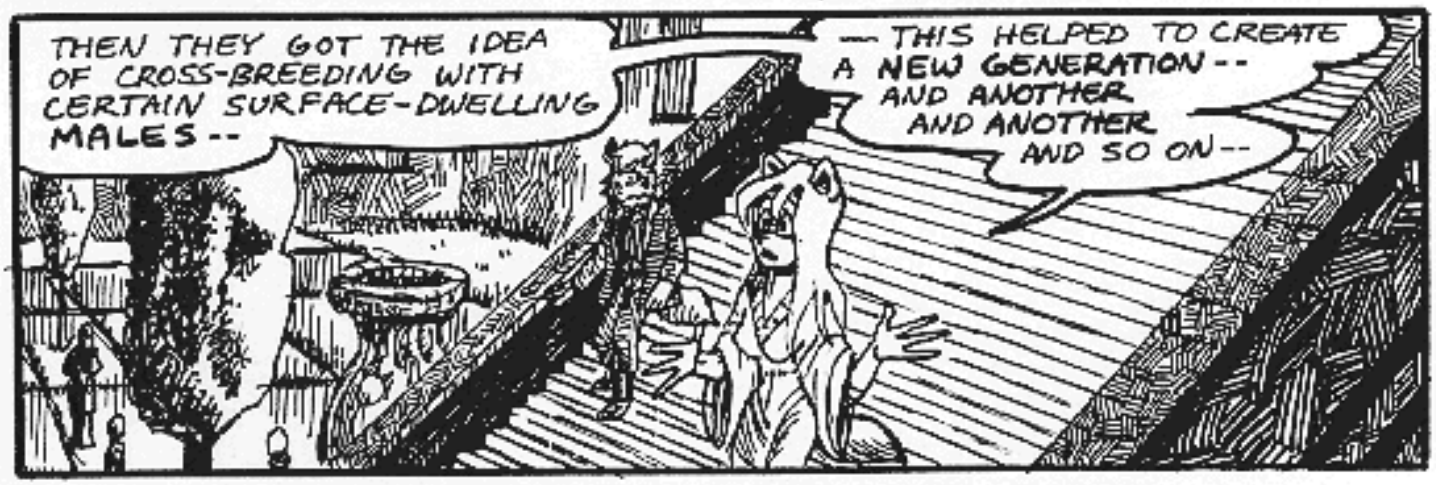
HERE -- IN WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED THE NEUTRAL AREA -- GRAVITY HAS NO EFFECT -- UNTIL WE REACH THE FAR SIDE OF THE AREA --


MEANWHILE, IN THE HOLLOW INTERIOR OF THE EARTH...
YOU ARE HERE
THOUGH WE HAVE MANY SMALLER COMMUNITIES SCATTERED THROUGHOUT AGHARTA...
SHANDALLA IS OUR... CAPITAL CITY -- SUCH AS IT IS...

EVERY SOUL IN AGHARTA IS BEING GATHERED TOGETHER HERE...
--IN PREPARATION FOR THE CONFLICT TO COME...

AND THAT WAS WITHOUT THE AID OF THE SOURCE!
ANYWAY, OUR ANCESTORS MANAGED TO FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE EARTH...
...AND HERE THEY BUILT A NEW CIVILIZATION -- UNDER THE RAYS OF THE CENTRAL SUN!

- WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY, PROVED TO BE SLOWLY DEGENERATIVE TO THEIR BODIES --
-- BUT THEY DIDN'T REALIZE IT UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE -- SO EVENTUALLY, THEY, WHO WERE ONCE ALMOST AGELESS BEGAN TO HAVE LIMITED LIFE SPANS...
IT ALSO CAUSED THE MALES TO BECOME STERILE!
THEY REALIZED THE RACE WAS DYING!


THEN THEY GOT THE IDEA OF CROSS-BREEDING WITH CERTAIN SURFACE-DWELLING MALES --
— THIS HELPED TO CREATE A NEW GENERATION -- AND ANOTHER AND ANOTHER AND SO ON --

OUR PEOPLE HAVE PRACTICED THIS FOR CENTURIES -- THE MOST GIFTED FEMALES AMONG US MUST GO UP TO THE SURFACE -- WE -- MINGLE -- WE OBSERVE... BUT ALWAYS WE REMAIN SOMEWHAT SEPARATE FROM THE SURFACE PEOPLE...
WE LEARN THER WAYS, AND FINALLY, WE CONTACT THE CHOSEN MALE --
— THAT'S OKAY! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT!

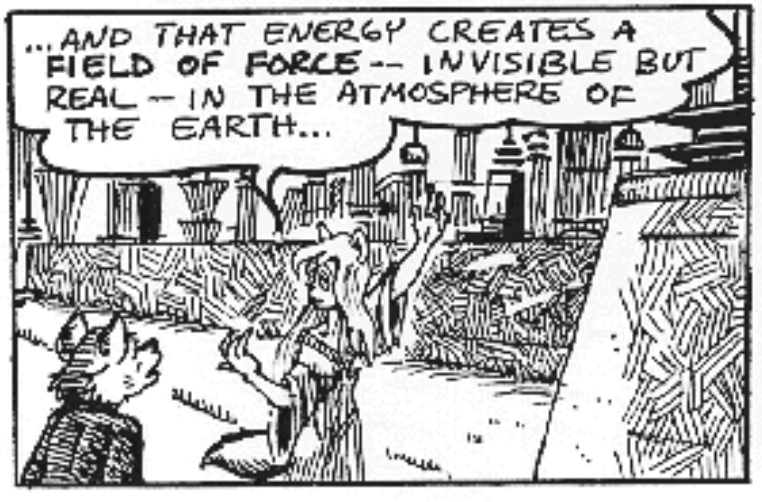
OH, ROBERT -- DON'T BE HURT -- I ADMIT THAT OURS BEGAN AS A PLANNED UNION... BUT, EVENTUALLY I REALLY DID LOVE YOU -- MY FEELINGS BECAME GENUINE BECAUSE I SAW SOMETHING IN YOU I'D NEVER KNOWN IN MY WORLD...

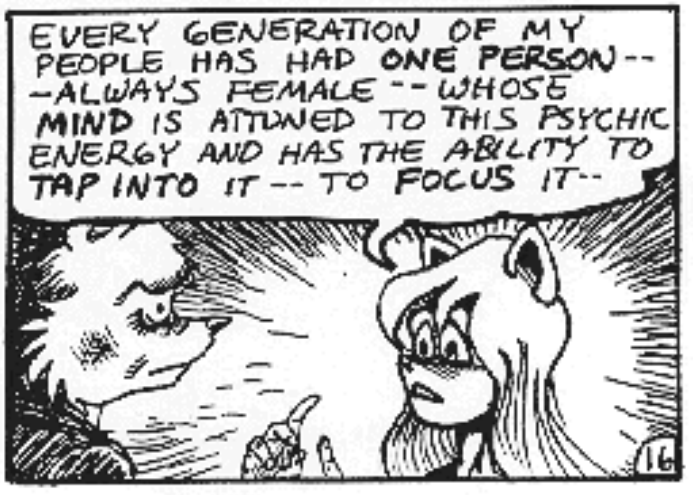
COMPASSION... AND SENSITIVITY...
AND VULNERABILITY...
AND THE ABILITY TO LOVE UNSELFISHLY...

I KNOW IT'S STRANGE -- BUT I SAW IN YOU WHAT THE SOURCE REALLY IS --
--AND THAT IS...?

-BOTH THE GOOD AND BAD OF EVERY SOUL ON THIS PLANET -- YOU MIGHT SAY IT'S THE MANIFESTATION OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF EVERY LIVING PERSON--!
I'M AFRAID I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND...

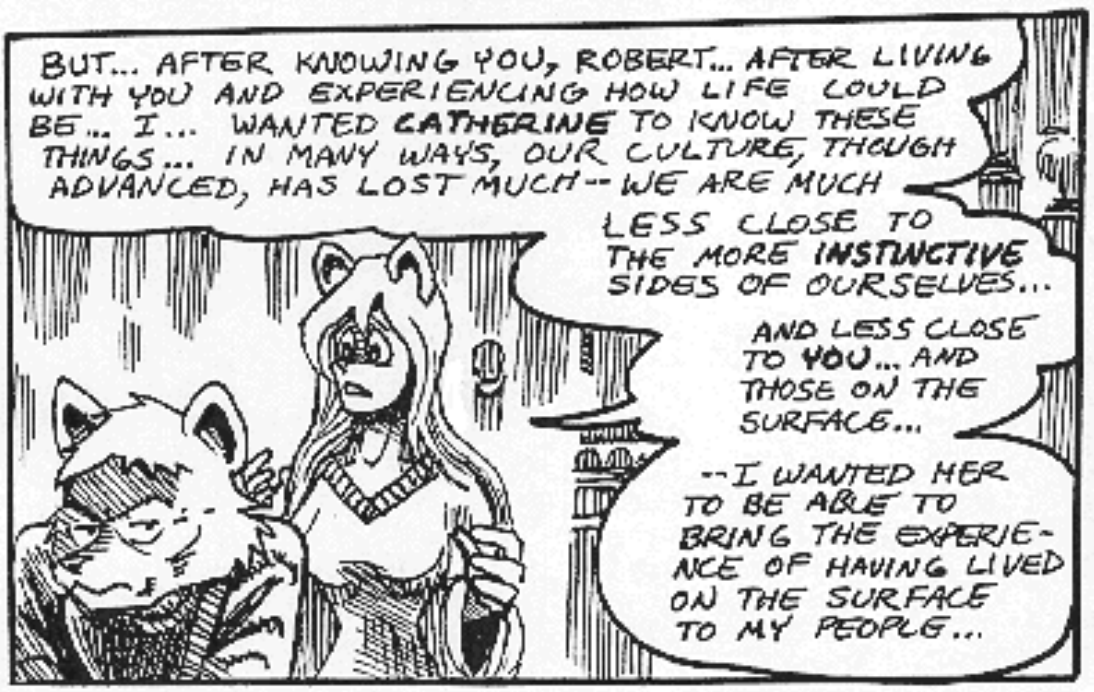
... EVERY... SOUL ON THIS WORLD HAS A CERTAIN KIND OF ENERGY... PSYCHIC ENERGY, IF YOU WILL...


...AND THAT ENERGY CREATES A FIELD OF FORCE -- INVISIBLE BUT REAL -- IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE EARTH...


EVERY GENERATION OF MY PEOPLE HAS HAD ONE PERSON -- -ALWAYS FEMALE -- WHOSE MIND IS ATTUNED TO THIS PSYCHIC ENERGY AND HAS THE ABILITY TO TAP INTO IT -- TO FOCUS IT--

I'M SORRY! I-- WELL, YOU RAISE CERTAIN FEELINGS IN ME, ROBERT--
UNFAMILIER FEELINGS-- I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!
-- PLEASE, TRY TO UNDERSTAND--

...UNLIKE CATHERINE, I WAS NOT RAISED ON THE SURFACE... I GREW UP DOWN HERE--TRAINED IN THE DISCIPLINE OF BEING A SENTIENT-- A CONTROLLER OF THE SOURCE--


BUT... AFTER KNOWING YOU, ROBERT... AFTER LIVING WITH YOU AND EXPERIENCING HOW LIFE COULD BE... I... WANTED CATHERINE TO KNOW THESE THINGS... IN MANY WAYS, OUR CULTURE, THOUGH ADVANCED, HAS LOST MUCH-- WE ARE MUCH LESS CLOSE TO THE MORE INSTINCTIVE SIDES OF OURSELVES...
AND LESS CLOSE TO YOU... AND THOSE ON THE SURFACE...
--I WANTED HER TO BE ABLE TO BRING THE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING LIVED ON THE SURFACE TO MY PEOPLE...

TO MAKE US CLOSER TO YOUR PEOPLE...

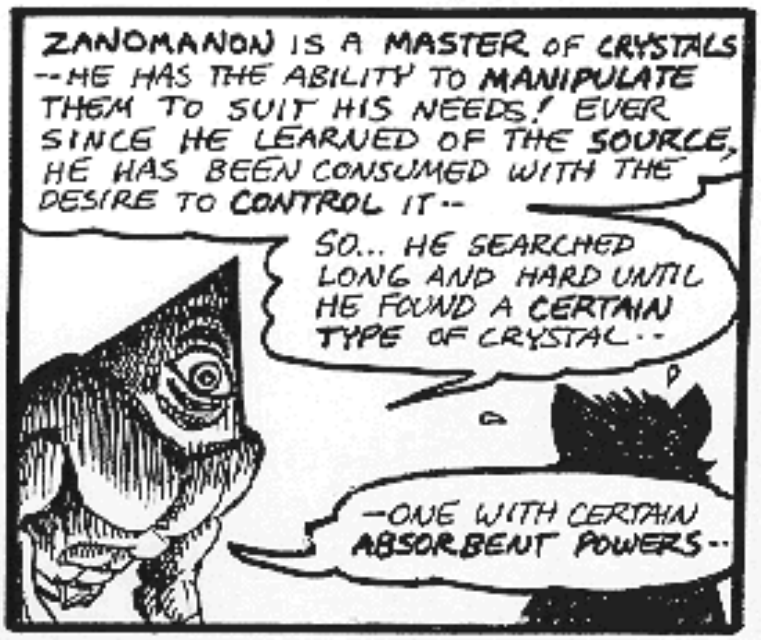
DOES THAT SOUND FOOLISH ?
I... DON'T KNOW... NO...

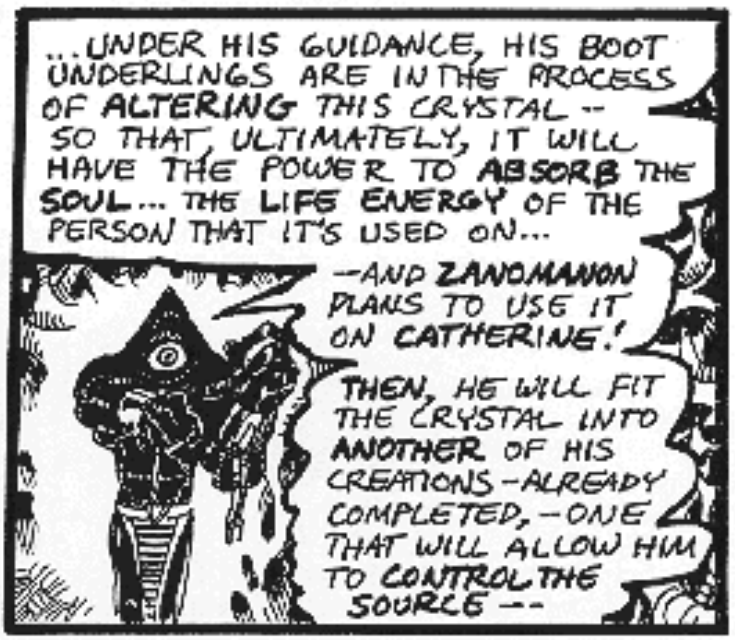
WHAT HAPPENS NOW MARIANA?
ROBERT... ZANOMANON HAS ALREADY SUMMONED THE SOURCE-- HE HAS BEEN TESTING IT ON THE SURFACE--

ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS WAIT... FOR THE ATTACK OF ZANOMANON... AND HIS ARMIES...

...AND THE SOURCE--!

AND MEANWHILE...
Z
WE'RE THERE, WALTER...
?
HUH?
THIS TUNNEL WILL LEAD US STRAIGHT TO ZANOMANON'S FORTRESS --!
OH!... WELL! WHAT ARE WE WAITIN' FOR? LETS GO!
- HOW'S CATHERINE?
FOR THE MOMENT, SHE'S FINE, WALTER... AHEM...
ER... ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THOSE PEOPLE YOU SAW LIVING IN THE CAVERN WE CAME THROUGH --?
WHO? - OH! THOSE INDIANS? --I HADN'T EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT THEM!


ZANOMANON IS A MASTER OF CRYSTALS --HE HAS THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THEM TO SUIT HIS NEEDS! EVER SINCE HE LEARNED OF THE SOURCE, HE HAS BEEN CONSUMED WITH THE DESIRE TO CONTROL IT--
SO... HE SEARCHED LONG AND HARD UNTIL HE FOUND A CERTAIN TYPE OF CRYSTAL--
--ONE WITH CERTAIN ABSORBENT POWERS--


...UNDER HIS GUIDANCE, HIS BOOT UNDERLINGS ARE IN THE PROCESS OF ALTERING THIS CRYSTAL -- SO THAT, ULTIMATELY, IT WILL HAVE THE POWER TO ABSORB THE SOUL... THE LIFE ENERGY OF THE PERSON THAT IT'S USED ON...
--AND ZANOMANON PLANS TO USE IT ON CATHERINE!
THEN, HE WILL FIT THE CRYSTAL INTO ANOTHER OF HIS CREATIONS--ALREADY COMPLETED,--ONE THAT WILL ALLOW HIM TO CONTROL THE SOURCE --

--THROUGH THE USE OF CATHERINE'S ABSORBED LIFE FORCE-- THUS, HE WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO HOOK UP PHYSICALLY WITH HER MIND IN HER BODY-- SO, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE-- SHE IS IN DEADLY PERIL!
DENNIS! THIS CRYSTAL! WHEN IS HE GOING TO USE IT ON HER?

WELL--I DON'T KNOW, WALTER...
YOU... YOU DON'T?!
THAT'S IN THE FUTURE I CAN'T SEE INTO THE FUTURE...
BUT--HE PLANS TO USE IT ON HER AS SOON AS THE CRYSTAL IS FINISHED-- YOU SEE, THOUGH HE DESIGNED IT,--

--HE HAS TO-- --WALTER!!
CATHERINE NEEDS ME!

I KNEW HE WASN'T READY TO HEAR IT!
--HE'S SO IMMATURE!
OH WELL, ...I'M GETTING USED TO IT...

MEANWHILE...
DO YOU SEE THE PEOPLE, ROBERT? THEY ARE ENTERING THE CENTRAL CITADEL-- -IT IS A PLACE OF... COMMUNION...
COMMUNION?

YES... HERE, WHEN ONE OF US DIES, OUR... SOUL, OR SPIRIT... RETURNS BRIEFLY TO CONSOLE AND COMMUNE WITH OUR SURVIVING LOVED ONES-- ...TO SAY GOODBYE...

...BEFORE GOING ON TO THE AFTERLIFE...

THAT'S THE LAST STRAW!!!

IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS I'VE SEEN THINGS THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IN IF I'D SEEN THEM IN A COMIC BOOK-- --MUCH LESS IN REAL LIFE--

--I'VE SEEN GIANTS, DINOSAURS, FLYING SAUCERS -- AND A CIVILIZATION AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH--
--THE HOLLOW EARTH!

I CAN EVEN ALMOST BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE PART- ALIEN -- --THAT YOU AND OUR DAUGHTER CAN CREATE A BEING OF PURE ENERGY--

--BUT I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IN A LIFE AFTER THIS ONE--
THAT'S GOING TOO FAR!!
--THAT WOULD MEAN THE CONTINUATION OF PAIN -- OF SORROW AND SUFFERING--

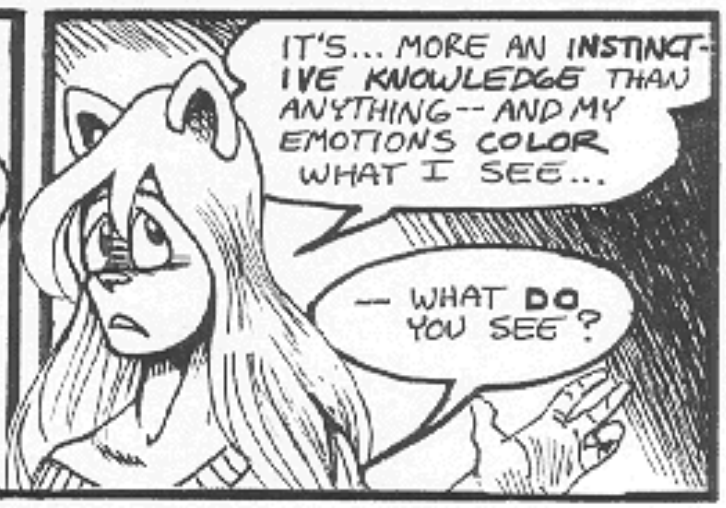
NO ESCAPE...
NO ESCAPE...
NO RELIEF...
ROBERT... I'M SORRY...

I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW FAR YOU HAD BEEN PUSHED--
--YOU'RE EXHAUSTED!
LET ME GET YOU TO A PLACE OF REST...

SO...
MARIANA...?
YES, ROBERT?
...ONE THING...

HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME? --WHY CAN'T YOU FIND CATHERINE?
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE, ROBERT--
THROUGH THE SOURCE... I HAVE THE ABILITY TO PERCEIVE CERTAIN THINGS BEFORE THEY OCCUR... BUT I'M NOT ALWAYS CORRECT IN MY EVALUATIONS OF WHAT I SEE...

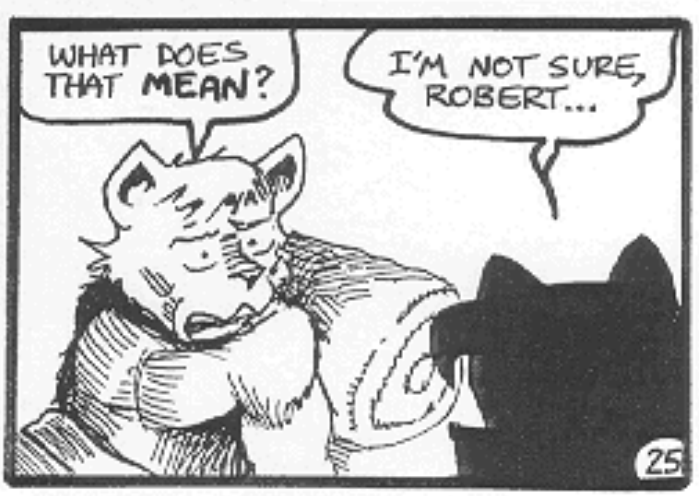
YOU... SEE INTO THE FUTURE?
LIMITEDLY... IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN... THIS IS WHERE MY MORTAL HALF GETS IN THE WAY...


IT'S... MORE AN INSTINCTIVE KNOWLEDGE THAN ANYTHING-- AND MY EMOTIONS COLOR WHAT I SEE...
-- WHAT DO YOU SEE?

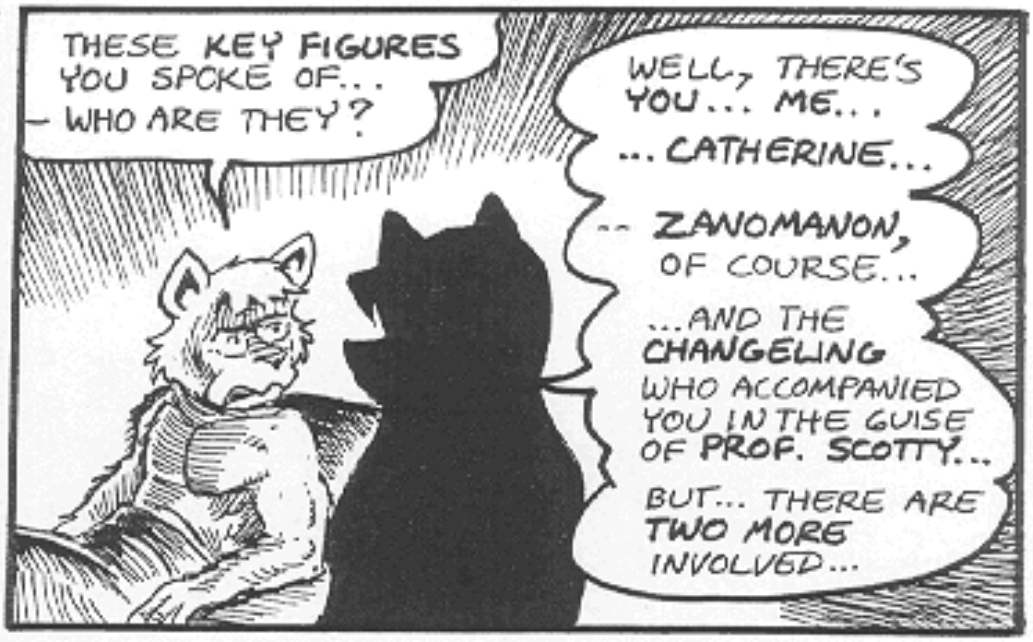
... MAINLY... FIGURES AND PERSONALITIES THAT MAY AFFECT THE FUTURE IN IMPORTANT WAYS... -EVENTS THAT ARE CRUCIAL--
I SEE... A GREAT CONFLAGRATION...

MANY DEAD, MANY DYING... PAIN... DESTRUCTION... RUIN...
≡SIGH≡

-AND THEN?
-- THEN... NOTHING!


WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
I'M NOT SURE, ROBERT...

...AND THAT... SCARES ME...


THESE KEY FIGURES YOU SPOKE OF... — WHO ARE THEY?
WELL, THERE'S YOU... ME...
...CATHERINE...
-- ZANOMANON, OF COURSE...
...AND THE CHANGELING WHO ACCOMPANIED YOU IN THE GUISE OF PROF. SCOTTY...
BUT... THERE ARE TWO MORE INVOLVED...

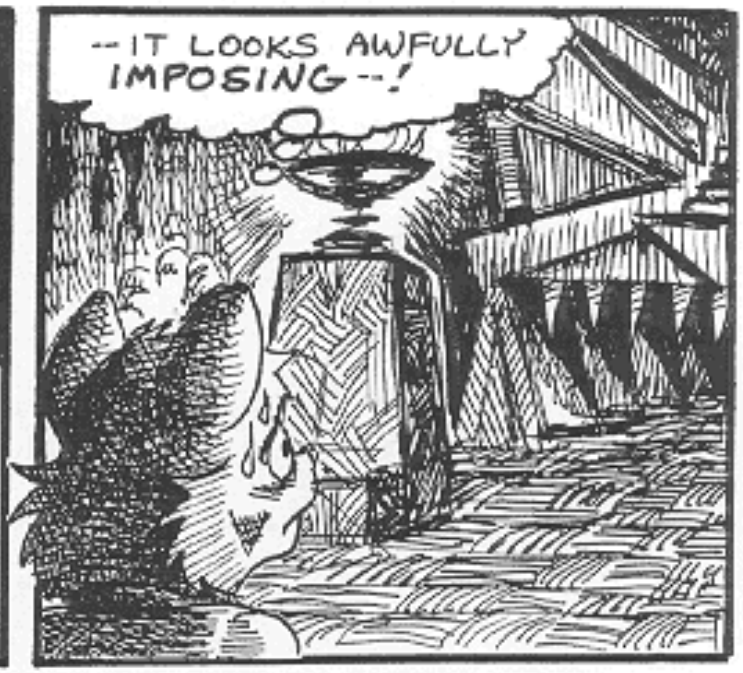
ONE... IS INDISTINCT TO ME-- A SHADOWY FIGURE I CAN NEVER MAKE OUT.
THE OTHER IS CATHERINE'S FRIEND, WALTER--!
HE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY THAT SEEMS TO BE VERY IMPORTANT.

I SAW MONTHS AGO THAT HE NEEDED TO BE INVOLVED -- TO INFLUENCE EVENTS SOMEHOW... I DON'T KNOW WHY... SOMETHING HE'S GOING TO DO IS GOING TO... AFFECT THINGS...

—I EVEN MANEUVERED THINGS SECRETLY, TO HELP HIM ACCOMPANY YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY...
—THEN-- HE'S STILL ALIVE--! THANK HEAVENS!
I THOUGHT... WELL, I FELT... RESPON-SIBLE...

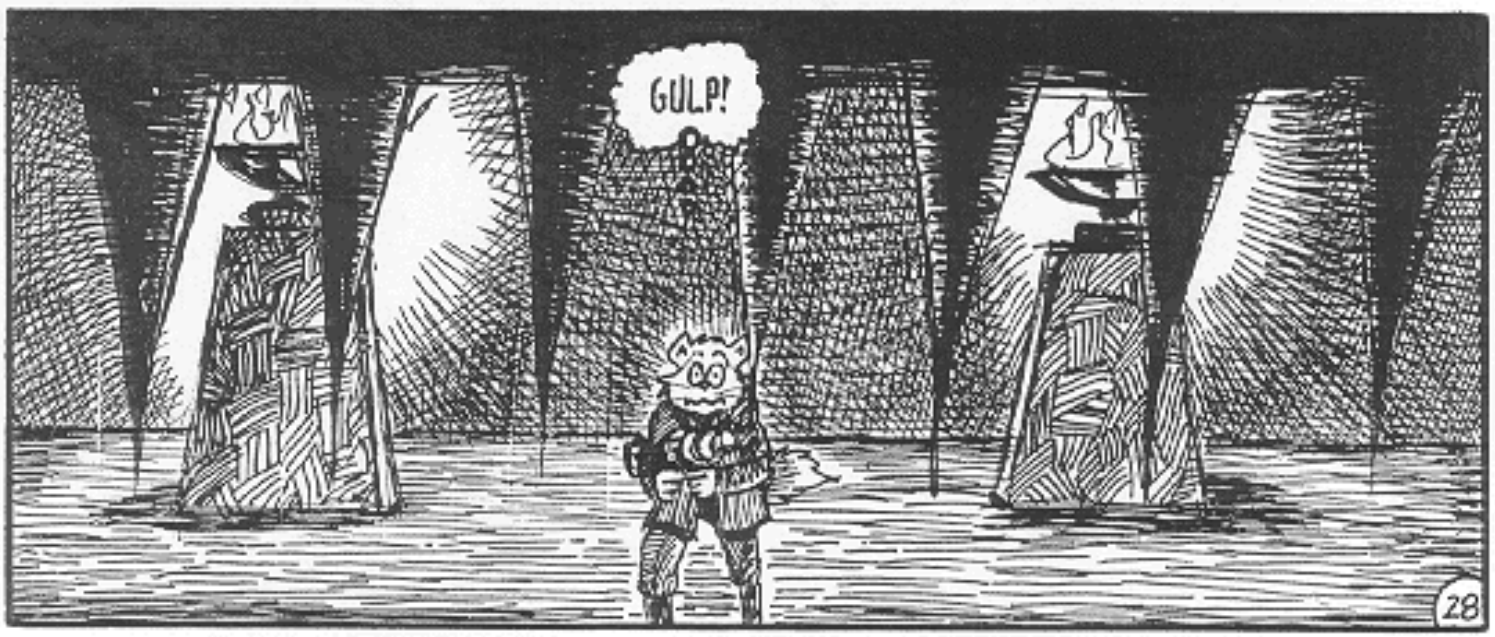
OH, YES... HE'S VERY MUCH ALIVE, ROBERT...
...AND VERY MUCH INVOLVED...

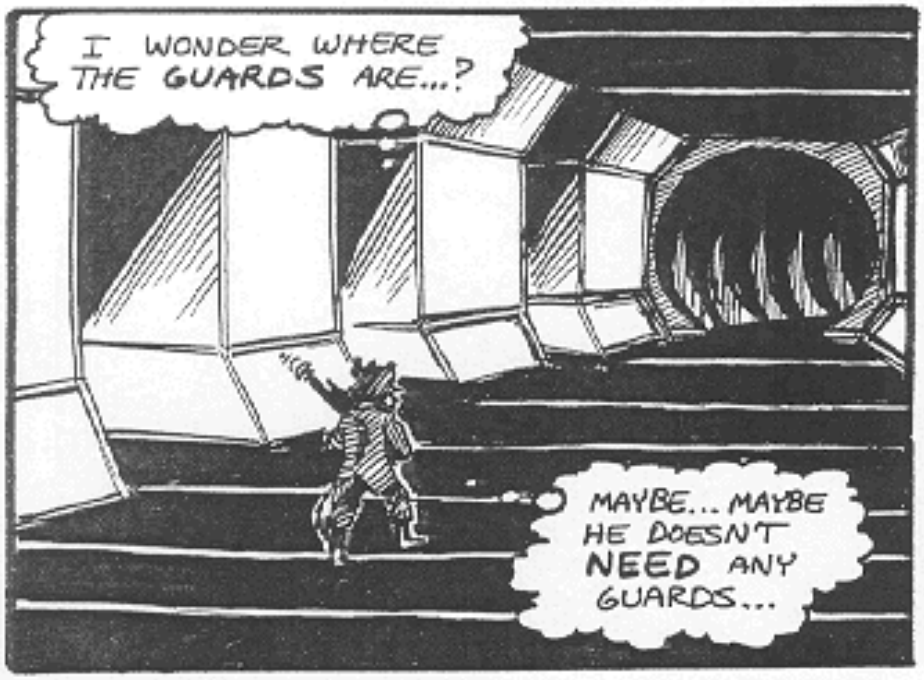
WELL, WALTER -- YOU'VE GOTTEN THIS FAR -- ARE YOU GOING TO TURN BACK NOW?
MAYBE I SHOULD --

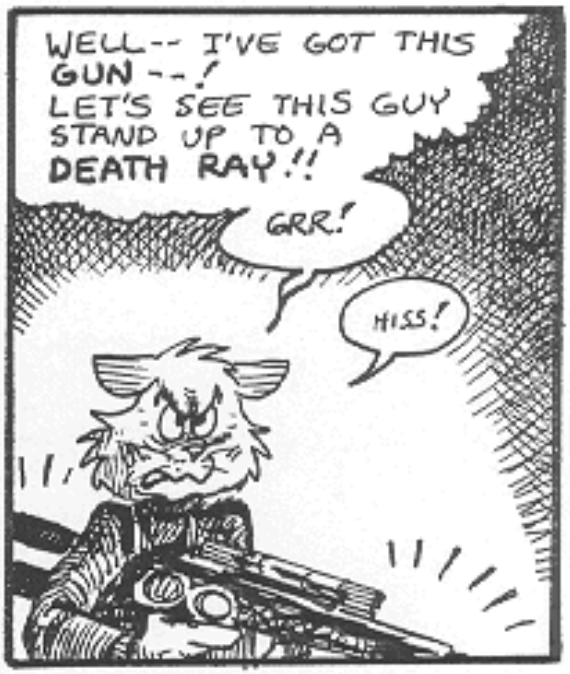

-- IT LOOKS AWFULLY IMPOSING --!

— NO! CATHERINE IS IN THERE! -- SHE'S THE GIRL I LOVE AND SHE'S IN DANGER!
— I'VE GOT TO GO IN!!

— QUIT SHAKING, KNEES! -- MY SPINE MIGHT HEAR YOU!
-- AND IT'S PURE JELLY ALREADY!


GULP!


I WONDER WHERE THE GUARDS ARE...?
MAYBE... MAYBE HE DOESN'T NEED ANY GUARDS...


WELL-- I'VE GOT THIS GUN --! LET'S SEE THIS GUY STAND UP TO A DEATH RAY!!
GRR!
HISS!

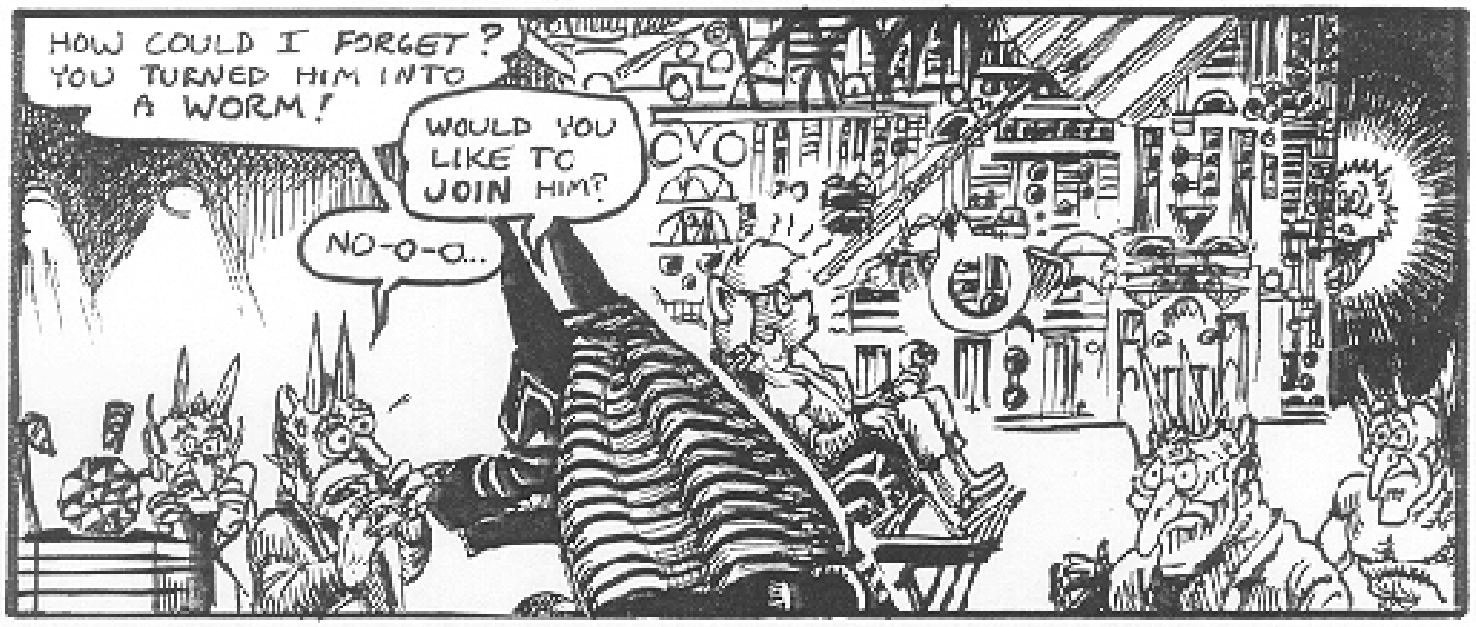
OUTSIDE...
— THAT CAT IS FAST WHEN HE'S MOTIVATED --!
-- HE'S ALREADY GONE INSIDE ZANOMANON'S FORTRESS --
— POOR FOOL!

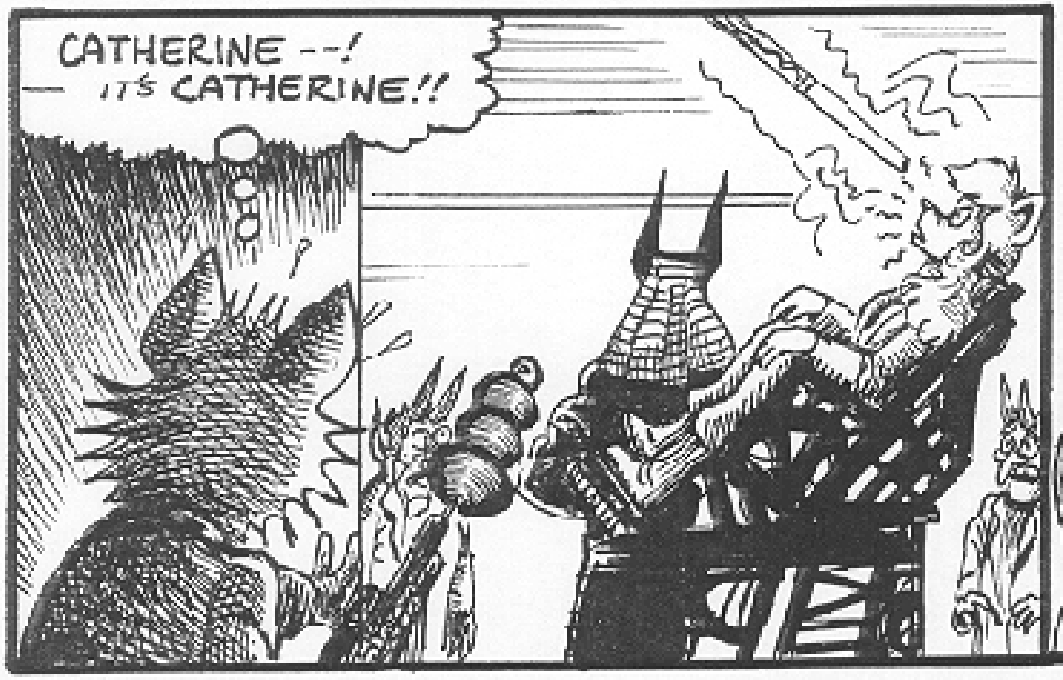
I WISH I COULD HAVE THOUGHT TO TELL HIM ABOUT ZANOMANON'S POWER--

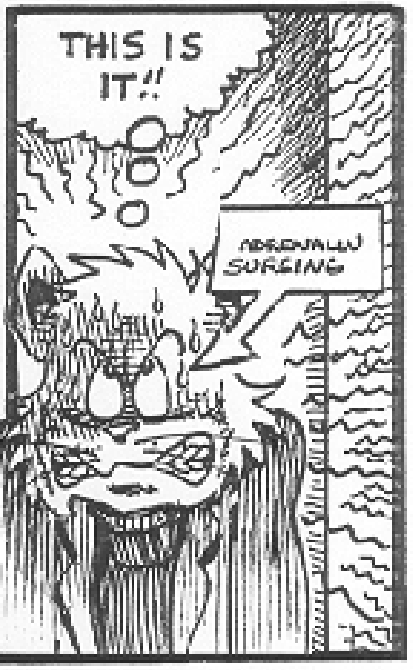
--BUT MAYBE IF HE'S LUCKY HE WON'T NEED TO KNOW...
-HE'S MADE IT THIS FAR UNDETECTED...

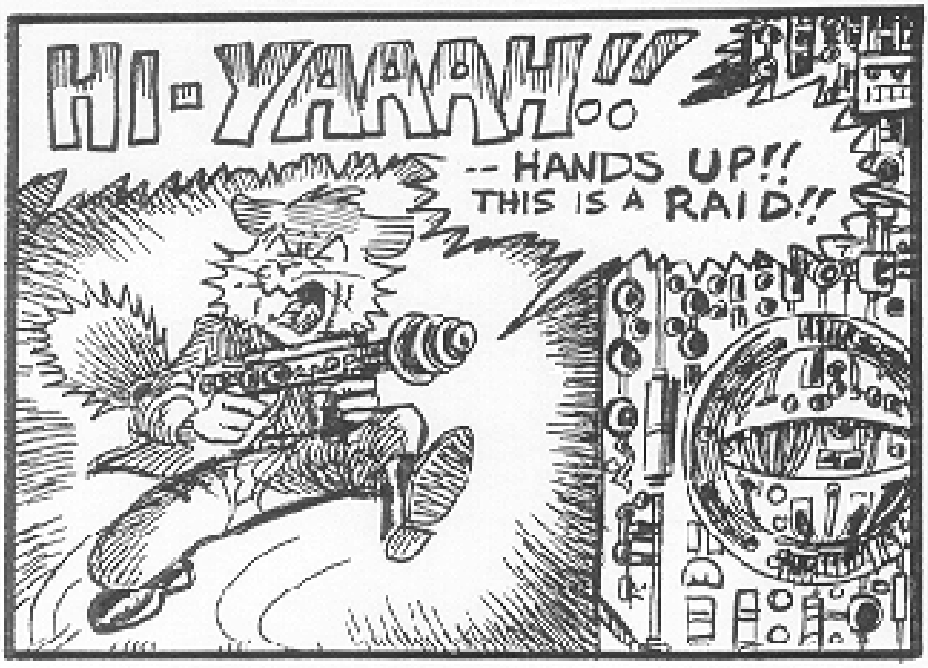
-NO ONE IS YET AWARE OF WALTER'S PRESENCE-- --AND HE'S ALREADY ALMOST WITHIN CATHERINE'S VACINITY--
--MAYBE HE CAN BLUFF HIS WAY THROUGH THIS--

Copyright 2000 by Mark A. Shaw

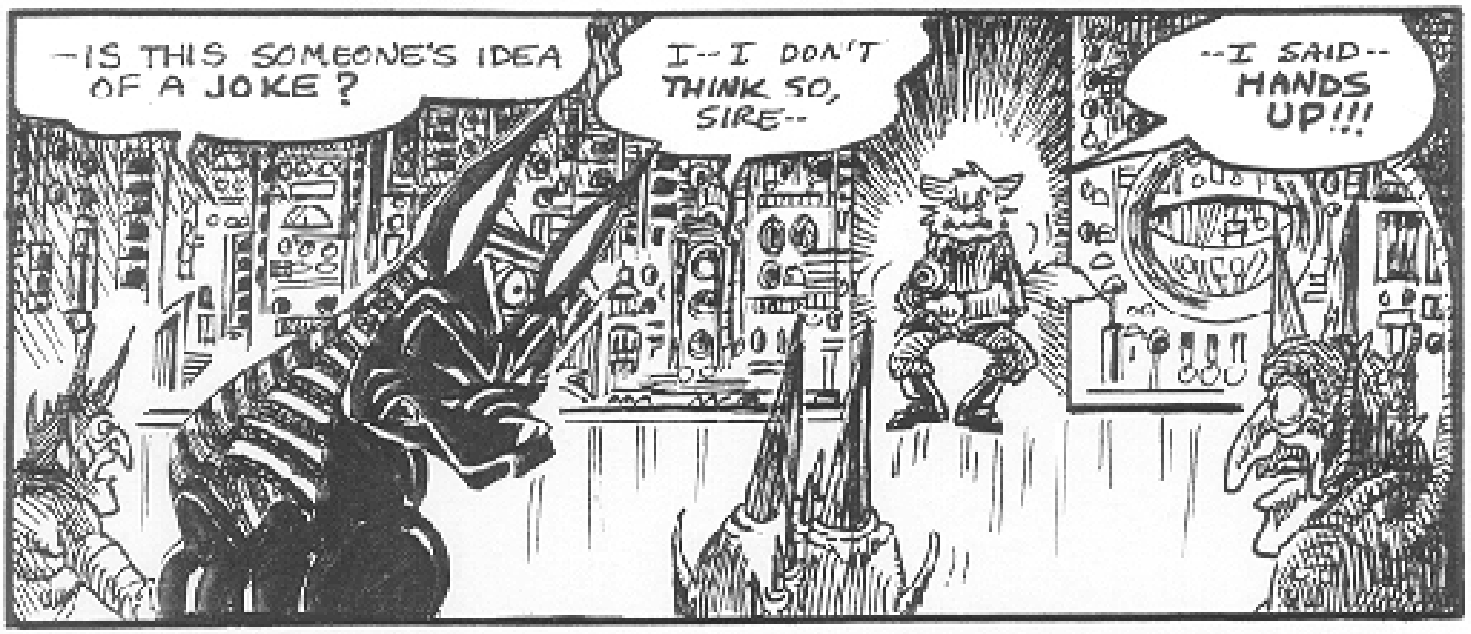


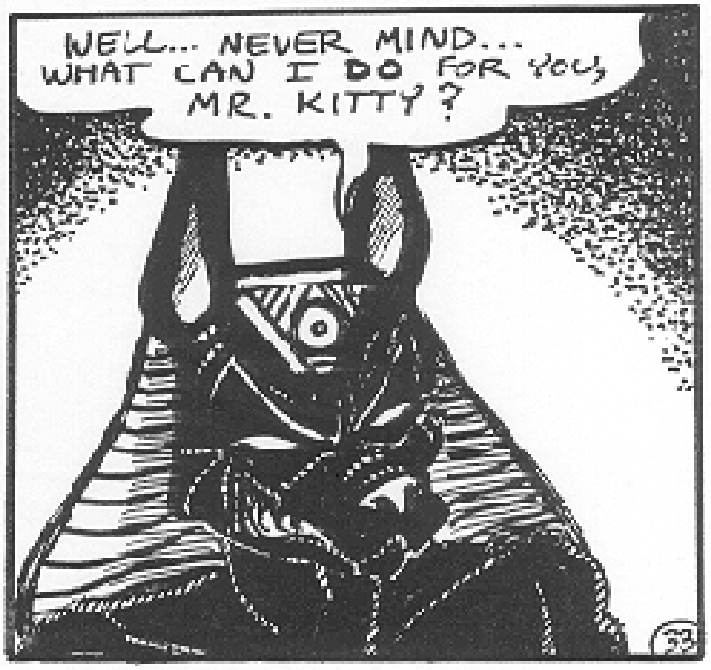






Copyright 2000 by Mark A. Shaw





Copyright 2000 by Mark A. Shaw

Copyright 2000 by Mark A. Shaw